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(Colonial Office)

CONFIDENTIAL

BRITISH EMBASSY, CHUNGKING.

28th October, 1942.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a report on conditions in Hong Kong as at the 11th May, submitted by Mr. E.J.M. Churn who arrived recently in Chungking.

- 2. Mr. Churn was detained at Kweiyang and again a few miles outside Chungking by the Chinese authorities. It was clear that suspicions engendered through some contact he may have had with "suspects" en route were unfounded and he and his sister who was detained with him, were eventually released after representations on the part of this Embassy (References to this case will be found in recent Monthly News Summaries from the Embassy.)
- 3. The report is of interest generally and gives Mr. Churn's own account of the treatment he received at the hands of the Chinese. He has since proceeded to India where it is his intention to join the Armed Forces if this is possible.
- 4. I shall be grateful if you will pass on a copy of this report to the Colonial Office.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,
Sir,
Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Sgd.) H.J. Seymour.

The Right Honourable,
Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.,
Foreign Office,

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE CONDITIONS EXISTING AT HONG KONG - 63 - BETWEEN THE DATES 25.12.41 and 11.5.42. SUBMITTED BY E.J.M. CHURN.

and other productions of the production of the p At the request of the Embassy, no notes or comments are given on the Food Problem.

destructions of the state of th - Hong Kong is used as a hospital base for wounded Japanese troops - shipping entering port carry human cargoes which are discharged and conveyed to the various hospitals during the night. Ships leaving port are laden with spoils viz. rice, flour, sugar, steel, motor cars, cotton yarn, woollen piece goods and medical supplies. The godowns of the three godown companies - Hong Kong & Kowloon-Wharf & Godown Co. Ltd.; China Provident Loan & Mortage-Co. Ltd.-and-Holt's Wharf - are almost emptied of the above named commodities. The Rice Monopoly's godowns are constantly drawn one for both local consumption and for export. In April, the "Hong Kong News", a Japanese organ, spread over the front page a news item that a shipment of 2,000 tons of rice had arrived from Bangkok. The cargo was discharged into Holt's Wharf and on probing and -enquiry from the stevedores working the ship, it was discovered that the rice was-loaded at Aberdeen, Hong Kong. The transport had met with Allied crafts and being badly holed, had limped back into port to discharge her cargo and to undergo repairs. The rice discharged was marked HKG. be with the surface of the surface o

afoliation in the desirection of the desirection of the property of the post-diagrams. Powards the end of April, the Japanese Government re-engaged the godown staff of the three-godown companies to check and make a physical count of the contents in godown. The following figures are of interest and concern only the Chinese Provident properties.

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Rice 50,000 tons 7,000 tons 200 tons

5,000 tons

believe the contraction of the c The figures for April were culled by the staff of the China Provident who were re-enlisted by the Japanese Government. .) Justical de louisevou en louisevou en louiseuronoughe de la

Stocks in private Godowns and shops were sealed and in some cases, were commandeered without redress to the owners. In January, when the food problem was really acute, one rice merchant named Tang Hoy, proprietor of Mow Fung Tai, was caught by the authorities attempting to remove two bags of rice from his shop. He was tied to a pillar on Wing Low Wharf for 36 hours and was released only when he had paid a substantial fine and the forced admittance by one of his coolies to theft of the rice. The coolie met with the supreme penalty.

The former rice merchants headed by Li Koon Chun and Ma Ying have formed a committee to examine the possibilities of importing rice into the Colony. No progress was made due to (a) lack of bottoms (b) exchange difficulties.

Shortly after the surrender and before the Military Authorities had organised themselves, pilfering and looting by Japanese Officers of godowns were conducted on a grand scale. They looted only valuable cargo. Andrew Tze of the Clover Flower Shop and Ho Sai Man, son of Ho Kam Tong, acted as guides, informants and leaders in these looting parties.

Due to the shortage of firewood and fuel, all Government-buildings and unoccupied private properties were ransacked of all woodwork. All that remains of queen's College is four brick walls - the roof trusses, floors, window frames et co have been removed. The police are helpless in this connection. Unarmed, they cannot-control these organised gangs of looters. Properties in Peak and Mid-Level areas have all suffered this fate.

The following persons have dome out into the 'open' as 'pro-Japanese' and are now, working for them in official capacities:-

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C. Campman () formerly Manager of Imperial Import and Export Co., now head of Chinese Section of Gendarmerie in Kowledn.

Tommy Tsui and C.Cheung () formerly members of Chinese Fortress Units now in Chinese Section of Gendarmerie in Hong Kong.

Peter Sin, solicitor of P. Sin & Co. is now Head of Department in Civil Administration.

Tsang Hung Nin () refugee from Shanghai and residing at 51, Conduit Road was visited on 27th December, 1941 by high Japanese Officials. His residence was given protection. He is now working for the Japanese Government, in what capacity I was unable to ascertain.

Liquidation of Banks etc: All foreign banks were in the process of being liquidated. The Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation advised most of the current account and other depositors not to file their claims unless, of course, the depositor intended to remain in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation was shifted to the Chartered Bank, their building having been taken over as "Government House". The staff was being treated well, although they were 'housed' or interned in one of the Chinese hotels along Connaught Road Central. On two occasions the entire staff did a 'sit-down strike' in protest of maltreatment and in both instances they obtained satisfaction. Although the Finance Department has in their hands the combination of the locks of the vaults - they have, however, not yet mastered the knack of opening the locks etc. Sir V.M. Grayburn had not been to the office since the surrender. He seems to be very depressed - physically he appeared to be in good health. Mr. Edmonston is in charge at the office.

No attempts were made by the Hong Kong Police to destroy their records of Registration of Persons. The Japanese Authorities have these records in their possession and are certainly using the data to further their own ends.

I was approached by the Governor's Department () to reassume the management of the China Provident Loan & Mortgage Co. Ltd. Their offer was turned down by me. They then approached me through the Taiwan Transportation Co. who made tempting offers to me which I again refused to accept. I was questioned subsequently by the Gendarmerie as to how I managed to find funds etc. for living expenses. At this juncture I left the Colony.

I left Hong Kong on the 11th May, 1942 bound for Kwongchowwan via Macao. Whilst in Macao, I stayed at the Hotel Riviera where I met Mr. George MacCaskie. I arrived at Kwongchowwan on 13th May and stayed at the Po Sek Hotel until 20th May when I left for the interior. I travelled via Watlam, Laochow, Kam Sing Kong to Kweiyang where I arrived on 8th June. I travelled up from Kam Sing Kong (-) in the company of my sister Vivienne Doris and Miss Chow () on China National Tea Corporation lorries which were originally bound for Chungking, but due to mechanical break-downs, they were unable to proceed further than Kweiyang. There I tried to obtain passage through various sources, including the Friends! Ambulance Unit whom I saw on 13th June, but without success. Eventually I obtained space on a lorry due to leave on 30th June but unfortunately we were taken into custody by the Kweiyang Police on 29th June. David Choa, who had arrived in Kweiyang in the company of Professor King and meeting me, he asked me to assist him since he was destitute. On our arrest, he was also taken in custody. When Vivienne's passport was confiscated by the Gendarmerie on 28th June I approached Captain Hemingway and Lieutenant Wright of British Military Mission for

assistance. They saw the Gendarmerie and then assured us that nothing serious would happen but that we may be inconvenienced for a few days until the passport had been verified. Within half an hour after they left us at the hotel, we were arrested. No charges were preferred against us and we were not permitted to communicate with the outside world. On 1.7.42 we were questioned, but the questionnaire dealt mainly with our family history and our social position in Hong Kong. I was told that we were shadowed all the way from Hong Kong and that our actions had been suspicious. challenged this allegation and asked them to produce their witness for my shadower for questioning. At this challenge they promptly dismissed the subject and asked further questions which had no bearing as to why we were arrested. On 2nd July our luggage was closely examined and we were then informed that our case was very serious and that we were to be transferred to a higher court viz. Military Court (. . . on). On 3rd July we were transerred to this court and were kept separately in cells whose area was approximately 40' x 10' and held 50 prisoners. I was forced to sleep on a space next to the open latrine. The conditions inside were filthy, full of rats, bed bugs, ticks and lice. We were given four mugs of water per person per day which we had to use both for drinking and washing. For food, we were given red rice, only - no meat, vegetable or soup were supplied.

On 4th July and 6th July we were questioned again, at the end of which we were told that they had no case against us but that we had to be kept in custody pending the transer of Miss Chow to their organization for questioning. I tried to contact Captain Hemingway but my letters were censored.

On 16th July we were pemitted to collect some clean clothing and managed to see the Trial Judge Mr. Kwok () who on seeing our sores insisted that Vivienne should be sent to hospital. We had, all three, contracted impetigo and scabies and medical aid was denied us. I had in my luggage some sulphalinamide and disinfectant, but we were not allowed to have it is case we attempted to commit suicide! In spite of the Judge's order Vivienne was not sent to hospital until 23rd July. On 25th July Captain Hemingway was permitted for the first time to see me. He informed me that we would be sent to Chungking within the next few days.

On the 29th July we were released only to be detained again within half an hour of our release.

On 2nd August I developed fever, my sores had spread all over my body so that I could not walk, sit or lie down without pain. I applied for tranfer to Hospital, but I was not sent there until 7th August. On 20th August we were placed on board British Military Mission truck bound for Chungking, but were taken off at To Chiu () on 21st August. The conditions at this prison were very much better than those at Kweiyang - here we received very good treatment - although rations were restricted to plain rice and vegetable soup. On 24th August we were questioned by Mr. Lee() of the Military Affairs Council and were asked identical questions to those at Kweiyang. We were told that we were still under suspicion on account of Miss Chow's activities and self confession and that the case would not be settled until Miss Chow had been transferred from Kweiyang to Chungking although, in truth, she had been transferred on or about 25th July. In spite of our proof of nationality we were told that our British status had not been established.

For the first time we were informed that a Mr. Y.C.Chang (), formerly of General Motors Corporation, a fellow passenger on the ship which conveyed us from Hong Kong to Kwongchowwan had made a report against us to the effect that

"High Japanese Officials saw us off at Hong Kong and that High Japanese Officials met and entertained us at Macao and that we stayed at a certain Chinese hotel". In actual fact, we were never questioned by Japanese Gendarmerie as to our identity on board the steamer before it sailed. We were met at Macao by Mr. Yue () and had dinner with him and Mr. Hum (), both I formerly attached to Anderson, Meyer & Co. I.td. at Hong Kong. We stayed at the Riviera Hotel and fortunately the receipted bill was kept and produced by me to substantiate my denials to the above allegations.

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It would appear and since confirmed by Miss Chow that we were supposed to have admitted our guilt on espionage charges. She was released before us. My sister Vivienne and I were released on 10th September whereas David Choa was still in o custody. In conclusion, I will state that I have known Miss Chow for some time before we left Hong Kong. From her activities both at Hong Kong and en route, there were no grounds for suspecting her to have 'pro-Japanese' tendencies. I am fully convinced that she is not and was never in any way acting for the Japanese Government directly or indirectly. We were all victims of the 'jitters' of the Kweoyang Police.

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